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DIRECT EDITION
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$2.99 US $3.05 CAN

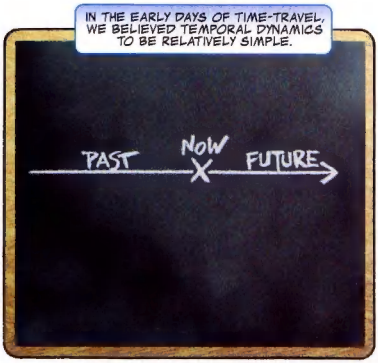
A team--and a family--of adventurers, explorers and imaginauts, the Fantastic Four lead lives both ordinary--and extraordinary!

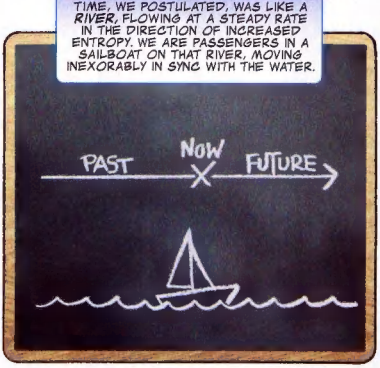
Fantastic Four

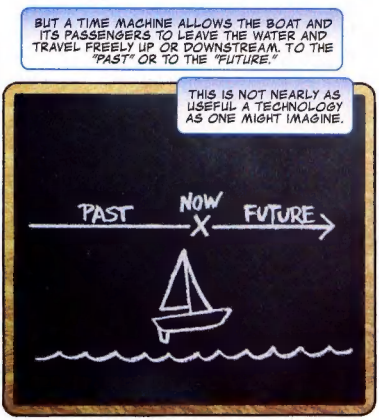
EPILOGUE
CHAPTER THREE
"THE END"

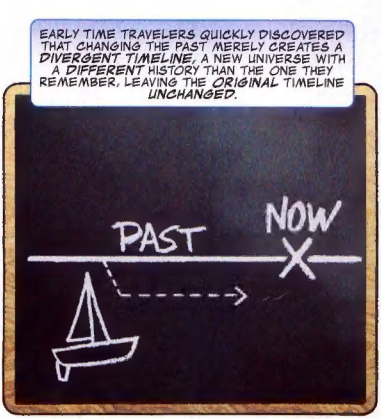
Victor Von Doom--from seventy-five years in the future--has traveled back to the present to stop Reed Richards from implementing idea #101 in his list of ideas to make the world a better place. Somehow, in Doom's future, Reed's idea to "fix everything" has resulted only in destruction, with Reed as a tyrant, ruling over the world. The rest of the Fantastic Four are not sure what to believe. Doom attacks, determined to stop Mr. Fantastic once and for all and "save" his future. At the last minute, the cavalry arrives as the future Fantastic Four appear in the present. But are they there for good or for ill?

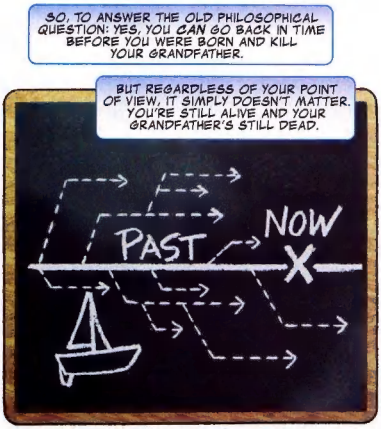
FANTASTIC FOUR (ISSN #0274-5291) **No. 553, March, 2008.** Published Monthly by MARVEL PUBLISHING, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. **PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** © 2008 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive names and likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. $2.99 per copy in the U.S. and $3.05 in Canada (GST #R127032852) in the direct market and $3.99 per copy in the U.S. and $3.99 in Canada (GST #R127032852) through the newsstand; Canadian Agreement #40668537. Canadian Agreement #40668537. **Printed in the USA.** Subscription rate (U.S. dollars) for 12 issues: U.S. $27.00; Canada $37.00; Foreign $39.00. **POSTMASTER: SEND ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO FANTASTIC FOUR, C/O MARVEL SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 116 NEWBURGH, NY 12550. TELEPHONE # (800) 217-9158. FAX # (845) 457-5029. subscriptions@marvelonline.com.** ALAN FINE, CEO Marvel Toys & Publishing Divisions and CMO Marvel Entertainment, Inc.; DAVID GABRIEL, Senior VP of Publishing Sales & Circulation; DAVID BOGART, VP of Business Affairs & Editorial Operations; MICHAEL PASCIULLO, VP Merchandising & Communications; JIM BOYLE, VP of Publishing Operations; DAN CARR, Executive Director of Publishing Technology; JUSTIN F. GABRIEL, Managing Editor; SUSAN CRESPI, Production Manager; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Mitch Dene, Advertising Director, at mdene@marvel.com. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.

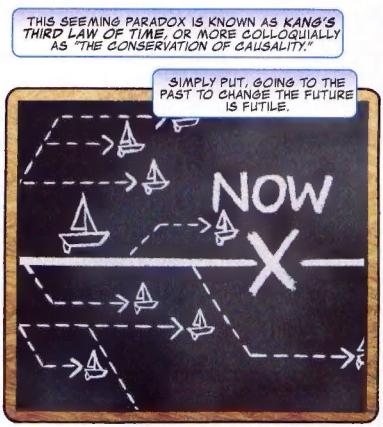

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF TIME-TRAVEL, WE BELIEVED TEMPORAL DYNAMICS TO BE RELATIVELY SIMPLE.
PAST
NOW
FUTURE


TIME, WE POSTULATED, WAS LIKE A *RIVER*, FLOWING AT A STEADY RATE IN THE DIRECTION OF INCREASED ENTROPY. WE ARE PASSENGERS IN A SAILBOAT ON THAT RIVER, MOVING INEXORABLY IN SYNC WITH THE WATER.
PAST
NOW
FUTURE


BUT A TIME MACHINE ALLOWS THE BOAT AND ITS PASSENGERS TO LEAVE THE WATER AND TRAVEL FREELY UP OR DOWNSTREAM. TO THE "PAST" OR TO THE "FUTURE."
THIS IS NOT NEARLY AS USEFUL A TECHNOLOGY AS ONE MIGHT IMAGINE.
PAST
NOW
FUTURE


EARLY TIME TRAVELERS QUICKLY DISCOVERED THAT CHANGING THE PAST MERELY CREATES A *DIVERGENT TIMELINE*, A NEW UNIVERSE WITH A *DIFFERENT* HISTORY THAN THE ONE THEY REMEMBER, LEAVING THE *ORIGINAL* TIMELINE *UNCHANGED*.
PAST
NOW


SO, TO ANSWER THE OLD PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION: YES, YOU *CAN* GO BACK IN TIME BEFORE YOU WERE BORN AND KILL YOUR GRANDFATHER.
BUT REGARDLESS OF YOUR POINT OF VIEW, IT SIMPLY DOESN'T MATTER. YOU'RE STILL ALIVE AND YOUR GRANDFATHER'S STILL DEAD.
PAST
NOW


THIS SEEMING PARADOX IS KNOWN AS *KANG'S THIRD LAW OF TIME*, OR MORE COLLOQUIALLY AS "THE CONSERVATION OF CAUSALITY."
SIMPLY PUT, GOING TO THE PAST TO CHANGE THE FUTURE IS FUTILE.
NOW

WHICH MAKES OUR CURRENT SITUATION SOMEWHAT BEWILDERING...
OR IT *WOULD*, IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW, AS DOOM DOES, AND AS I KNOW EVEN *MORE* INTIMATELY, THAT *KANG* IS A LIAR, AND THEREFORE HIS LAWS AREN'T ENTIRELY TO BE TRUSTED.
WE SEARCHED THROUGH NEARLY THREE HUNDRED COLLATERAL TIMELINES BEFORE WE FOUND YOU HERE.
SURELY YOU MUST HAVE REALIZED DOOM'S ONLY GOAL MUST BE TO CORRECT *THIS* TIMELINE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD DO ANY OF THIS. ALL YOU COULD EVEN *HOPE* TO DO IS CREATE A NEW TIMELINE WHERE YOU SUCCEEDED. IT'S A LAW OF TIME: YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST.
THAT'S CERTAINLY WHAT WE *USED* TO BELIEVE.
THE END
DWAYNE MCDUFFIE WRITER
PAUL PELLETIER PENCILER
RICK MAGYAR INKER
WIL QUINTANA COLORIST
VC'S RUS WOOTON LETTERER
MOLLY LAZER ASSOC. EDITOR
TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

IF THE PAST TRULY CANNOT BE CHANGED, WHY WOULD I EVEN COME HERE?
MORE TO THE POINT, WHY WOULD "THE SAVIOR OF HUMANITY" AND HIS THREE LACKEYS FOLLOW?
BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT DESPITE KANG'S LONG-UNCONTESTED LIES, THE PAST CAN BE CHANGED, AND THAT ALONE AMONG ALL WHO EVER LIVED, DOOM HAS THE WILL TO CHANGE IT!
JUST BECAUSE YA KEEP YER BRAIN IN A TIN CAN DON'T MEAN IT CAN'T GO BAD IN A HUNNERT YEARS.
C'MON, DOOMSIE, TIME TO GO BACK TO YER 5-STAR PRISON CELL.
UNHAND ME!

YOU OKAY, BEN?
I'M FINE, JOHN. HE CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE... IS ALL.
DOOM'S BEAM CARRIED GENETIC CODE-REPROGRAMMING FLASH MEMORY. HE FORCED YOU TO REVERT TO YOUR HUMAN FORM.
YOU MEAN, I CAN BE CURED?
BETTER THAN THAT. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CHANGE BACK AND FORTH AT WILL.
IT'S GOING TO BE A FEW YEARS BEFORE REED WORKS IT OUT, THOUGH.
DON'T RAISE HIS HOPES UNNECESSARILY. YOU'RE ASSUMING THAT OUR TIMELINE STAYS PARALLEL TO THEIRS, A HUGE ASSUMPTION, CONSIDERING THE TEMPORAL CONTAMINATION THAT'S ALREADY OCCURRED HERE.
YOU STILL FAIL TO UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?
ALL I KNOW IS, A LITTLE BIT O' CONCENTRATION--

--AND I C'N SHAKE OFF WHATEVER DOOM DID TA ME--
--SO THAT, BEFORE YOU KNOW IT--
--THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING IS BACK!
AN THAT'S REAL BAD NEWS FER YOU.
YOU SEE? HE'S GOING TO KILL ME IF HE CAN. RICHARDS HAS COMMANDED IT!
RIDICULOUS! I WOULD NEVER--
REED, THIS IS DECADES BEFORE YOU FULLY REGAINED THE WORLD'S TRUST.
THINK ABOUT WHEN WE ARE, REED.
BETWEEN THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT, WORLD WAR HULK AND THAT SKRULL BUSINESS, YER STOCK'S NEVER BEEN LOWER.
DON'T DESPAIR, RICHARDS. THERE'S STILL TIME TO FIX IT ALL. JUST KILL ME. IF YOU CAN, AND YOU CAN STILL RULE THE WORLD!

NOBODY'S KILLING ANYBODY. WE'RE ALL GOING TO SIT DOWN AND *TALK* UNTIL EVERYBODY UNDERSTANDS WHAT'S GOING ON.
EVEN WITH A TIME MACHINE WE DON'T HAVE *THAT* LONG.
I HATE TA SAY IT, KID, BUT I MAKE A GOOD POINT.
EVEN SETTING ASIDE THE DECADES OF HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY WE WOULD HAVE TO MASTER, THERE'S A MUCH MORE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM.
WHO DO WE BELIEVE?
WE'RE FROM THE FUTURE, WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF HIDDEN AGENDAS YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DETECT.
AND DOOM HAS ALREADY ATTEMPTED TO MISLEAD YOU.
ONLY ABOUT *TRIVIALITIES*, AND ONLY TO *SAVE THE WORLD*.
SO YOU'VE SAID. AND IT'S *JUST* WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY.

STOP IT, REED. IT'S NOT WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY. THAT'S NOT WHO YOU ARE.
AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S OCCURRED, YOU STILL BELIEVE IN HIM?
THE MAGNITUDE OF YOUR NAIVETÉ IS ASTONISHING.
I'M NOT NAIVE.
I KNOW THIS MAN AS WELL AS I KNOW MYSELF. RECENT EVENTS HAVE...FORCED ME TO CONFRONT WEAKNESSES OF HIS THAT I PREFERRED NOT TO DWELL ON.
BUT IF YOU THINK THAT I DON'T LOVE THIS MAN, FLAWS AND ALL. IF YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW BOTH HOW FAR HE'LL GO AND EXACTLY WHERE HE DRAWS THE LINE--
--THEN YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S NAIVE.

WITH THE BENEFIT OF 75 YEARS MORE EXPERIENCE, WOULD YOU SAY THAT I UNDERSTAND REED RICHARDS?
SINCE YOU WERE 12 YEARS OLD.
YOU OVERPLAYED YOUR HAND, VICTOR. I'M DISAPPOINTED WITH REED. ANGRY WITH HIM. BUT THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO BETRAY HIM.
IF YOU'D TOLD ME THAT HIS PLAN FAILED AND HE COULDN'T FIX IT, I'D HAVE HELPED YOU. IF YOU'D TOLD ME HE MADE A MISTAKE, SAME THING.
BUT YOU COULDN'T DO THAT, COULD YOU? BECAUSE FOR ALL YOUR TREACHERY, FOR ALL YOUR TOWERING MEGALOMANIA, THERE'S ONE THING YOU JUST CAN'T BRING YOURSELF TO DO.
LIE.
OH, YOU'LL DISSEMBLE AND MISDIRECT. YOU'LL LET US THINK YOU BROUGHT T'CHALLA AND NAMOR WITH YOU FROM THE FUTURE. EVEN LET US THINK I LEFT MY HUSBAND FOR NAMOR.
I UTTERED NOT A SINGLE UNTRUTH.
LET'S JUST AGREE THAT YOU LIVED UP TO YOUR PERSONAL CODE OF ETHICS.
THEN YOU'VE PROVEN MY POINT FOR ME.

I'M TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FUTURE. REED WILL CREATE UTOPIA, THEN MADNESS WILL OVERTAKE HIM. HIS EGO--
IS COMPLETELY IN CHECK. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN PROPORTIONAL TO HIS ABILITIES. POWER WOULD NEVER GO TO HIS HEAD.
TRUE. REED DOESN'T WANT POWER. HE ISN'T EVEN INTERESTED IN IT.
I'M GLAD WE ALL AGREE. THIS FARCE HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH. VICTOR?
IT'S TIME TO GO BACK WHERE YOU BELONG.
YOU SEE! YOU SEE WHAT HE'S DOING?
ZRRRAK
AHHH!
THEY'RE GOING TO KILL ME, OR WORSE, REPROGRAM MY BRAIN TO REMOVE "UNDESIRABLE" IDEAS.
I REQUEST ASYLUM!
IT'S A DEAL. WE GOT A SURPLUS OF RUBBER ROOMS FER NUTJOBS LIKE YOU.
CEASE YOUR PRATTLING. YOU DO NOT AMUSE!
VICTOR VON DOOM SEEKS ASYLUM WITH THE PRESENT DAY FANTASTIC FOUR, AS PROTECTION FROM THE TYRANT REED RICHARDS, WHO SEEKS TO SILENCE THE ONE REMAINING VOICE OF DISSENT.

WE HAVE TO HONOR DOOM'S REQUEST.
GOOD ONE. THERE'S STILL TIME FOR A QUICK GAME O' "KICK THE CAN" BEFORE THEY HAUL YOU OFF TO FUTURE JAIL.
BEN, WAIT.
YOU MEAN THAT WE'RE GOING TO PROTECT DOOM...FROM OURSELVES?
AT LEAST UNTIL WE'RE CERTAIN THAT I'M NOT GOING TO BECOME THE TYRANT HE DESCRIBES.
DOESN'T THE VERY FACT THAT YOU'RE CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY MEAN THAT YOU WON'T?
WHAT, LIKE IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE CRAZY IT MEANS YOU'RE NOT CRAZY?
YES. SORT OF.
'CAUSE I'VE MET PLENTY OF PEOPLE CRAZY AS HELL WHO WONDER IF THEY'RE CRAZY.
THIS ISN'T OPEN TO DEBATE. I NEED FOR YOU TO BACK ME ON THIS.
YOU KNOW I WILL.
DITTO.
UNANIMOUS.

UNTIL I'M SATISFIED THAT DOOM'S VERSION OF EVENTS IS INCORRECT, HE'S UNDER OUR PROTECTION. I'M SORRY, REED.
NOT AT ALL. IT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE. WHAT I DID.
YEAH, BUT WE STILL GOT A PROBLEM. DOOM'S GOTTA BE STOPPED BEFORE HE SEALS THIS TIMELINE.
SEALS...?
OOPS. EITHER I SAID TOO MUCH, OR THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORY'LL FIX IT. SORRY.
I WAS HOPING TO AVOID THIS PART, SOMEHOW.
YEAH, WELL. TIME TRAVEL SUCKS.
WE'LL NEED YOU TO STAND DOWN AND HAND OVER THE PRISONER.
"I'M SORRY, I CAN'T DO THAT." "YOU HAVE TO. DOOM'S CONNING YOU." "NO I'M NOT." "YES, YOU ARE." "GET YOUR HANDS OFF OF ME." ET CETERA, ET CETERA.
TRUST US, WE'VE BEEN THROUGH IT ALL BEFORE. WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT. THERE'S NOTHING LEFT EXCEPT TO--
FLAME ON!

UNNNF!
YA NEARLY KNOCKED MY BLAMED BLOCK OFF! WHEN DID I GET SO STRONG?
THOOM
YOU AIN'T SEEN NUTHIN'. I'M HOLDIN' BACK SO'S I DON'T RUIN OUR MOVIE STAR GOOD LOOKS.
RRRRR!
STRUGGLE IF YA WANT. WE KEEP GETTING STRONGER FER THE REST OF OUR LIFE.
LIKEWISE, I BURN LONGER AND HOTTER THAN I DID WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, AND I HAVE A LOT MORE CONTROL OF HEAT.
I'M IN THE PRIME OF MY LIFE. I'M GOING TO PUNCH YOUR LIGHTS OUT, GRANDPA.
ARE YOU ACTUALLY DUMB ENOUGH TO THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME WITH FIRE?
YEAH. I KINDA DO.
FLAME OFF.
WHAT'D YOU...?

UNPH!
OKAY. THAT'S TWO DOWN. ARE WE STILL WITHIN VARIANCE? CAN WE QUIT?
NOT YET. THIS FIGHT IS STILL NECESSARY TO PREVENT BRANCHING.
IS THAT MEASURING...?
YES. THIRD LAW METRICS. MEASURING THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSERVATION OF CAUSALITY.
YOU AREN'T HERE JUST TO STOP DOOM, YOU'RE TRYING TO PRESERVE THIS TIMELINE. WHY?
NOSTALGIA, I SUPPOSE. BECAUSE, AT LEAST SO FAR, THIS IS MY TIMELINE.
THEN, VICTOR--
SILENCE!
SHHHRAK
REED!
THINK, SUE. WHY WOULD VICTOR WANT REED TO STOP TALKING?
GOOD QUESTION...

LET'S FIND OUT.
KA-THOOOM
RELEASE ME!
IN A MOMENT--
--WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A LITTLE TALK FIRST.
REED, YOU'VE FIGURED IT ALL OUT, HAVEN'T YOU?
I BELIEVE SO. MOST OF IT, ANYWAY.
THEN TELL US WHAT VICTOR DIDN'T WANT US TO HEAR.

I'D SUSPECTED THE TRUTH FOR QUITE A WHILE AND SEVERAL OF VICTOR'S OFFHAND COMMENTS INDICATED I MIGHT BE RIGHT. BUT WHEN I SAW THIS DEVICE, I KNEW.
WHEW! GLAD YOU CLEARED ALL THAT UP FER US!
I'M GETTING TO IT, OLD FRIEND.
FOR YEARS I'VE BELIEVED THAT TIME TRAVEL INVARIABLY CREATES PARALLEL TIMELINES. MY FATHER CODIFIED THIS AS "THE CONSERVATION OF CAUSALITY".
"THE THIRD LAW OF TIME." WE WUZ LISTENING.
MORE RECENTLY, I'VE GROWN TO SUSPECT THAT ONLY MAJOR DISRUPTIONS OF CAUSALITY NECESSITATE THE CREATION OF A BRANCHING TIMELINE.
BUT MINOR ONES TEND TO WORK THEMSELVES OUT WITHIN THE ORIGINAL TIMELINE. YES.
TIMELINES ARE ROBUST, AND DIFFICULT TO DISRUPT. IF YOU GO BACK IN TIME AND STOP THE ASSASSINATION OF LINCOLN, HE USUALLY DIES SOME OTHER WAY AND THE TIMELINE CONTINUES, ESSENTIALLY AS IT DID BEFORE.
EXCEPT NOW EVERYBODY REMEMBERS THE TIME LINCOLN WAS ALMOST KILLED AT THE THEATER, A COUPLE OF DAYS BEFORE HE DIED ■ A BATHTUB SLIP.
FOR EXAMPLE.
IT MAY BE THAT LINCOLN ORIGINALLY DIED IN THE BATHTUB SLIP, BUT HISTORY HAS ADJUSTED BY ASSASSINATING HIM IN THE THEATER.

THE LINCOLN THING'S JUST AN EXAMPLE, THOUGH. YOU GUYS COMING BACK HERE WITHOUT CHANGING HISTORY IS REAL. YOU ARE OUR FUTURE.
SO FAR. MY READINGS INDICATE THAT THIS TIMELINE HASN'T DIVIDED, IT'S SIMPLY LOOPED ■ACK ON ITSELF.
YOU GUYS ARE TRYIN' TO KEEP THINGS THE WAY THEY WERE, BUT DOOMSIE...
...IS TRYING TA CHANGE HISTORY.
AS I SAID. TO PREVENT REED'S MADNESS FROM DESTROYING THE FUTURE.
DESTROYING IT HOW, VICTOR? YOU SAY YOU'RE A MAN OF HONOR... TELL US THE TRUTH.
WHAT'S THE WORLD LIKE WHERE YOU COME FROM?
PARADISE.
IT'S PARADISE.

HIS DUAL-LAYER DYSON SWARM PROVIDES NEARLY FREE AND INEXHAUSTIBLE ENERGY. ADVANCES IN MEDICINE HAVE GREATLY EXTENDED BOTH THE DURATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE. THERE HASN'T BEEN A WAR IN OVER 40 YEARS, HUNGER AND CRIME ARE ALL BUT UNKNOWN, EDUCATION IS UNIVERSAL. ART THRIVES.
THERE'S STILL A LOT OF WORK TO DO, BUT--
BUT HUMANITY IS SAFE, HAPPY, PROSPEROUS AND STRIVING FOR TRUE GREATNESS.
AND IT'S ALL RICHARDS'S FAULT?
FAULT? ARE YOU OUT OF YER BLAMED MIND?
THAT HONOR BELONGS TO ME! I SHOULD BE THE SAVIOR OF HUMANITY, NOT RICHARDS. DOOM!
NOW YOU KNOW THE TRUTH. DOOM CAME BACK TO THE PAST, INTENDING TO CORRECT HISTORY SO THAT THE FUTURE WOULD BE THE PRODUCT OF HIS HAND.
INSTEAD, REED RICHARDS WINS AGAIN.
IT OCCURS TO ME THAT IT MAY BE POSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE TO WIN.
I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO THINK OF IT.

SHORTLY...
EVERYTHING'S SET. WE'VE FOUND A BRANCHING TIMELINE SIMILAR TO THIS ONE, EXCEPT--
EXCEPT YOU'RE DEAD.
IN THAT TIMELINE, ALL OF THE SUPER HEROES ARE DEAD. KILLED BY THE HULK, AS REVENGE FOR SOMETHING HE THOUGHT THE ILLUMINATI AND I HAD DONE TO HIM. AFTER HE DISCOVERED THE TRUTH, HE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE.
SO THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, DOOM. A WHOLE WORLD TO TAME. I PRAY THAT YOU'RE AS GOOD AS YOUR WORD AND THAT WE'RE SENDING THEM A SAVIOR INSTEAD OF A MONSTER.
--NEITHER
I'M NOT A MONSTER, RICHARDS. AND LOATH THOUGH I AM TO ADMIT IT, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS--
ALL THAT AND OUR TIMELINES STILL HAVEN'T DIVERGED.
WE'D BETTER GO WHILE THAT'S STILL THE CASE.
WAIT.
HOW DOES IT ALL TURN OUT?
I SHOULDN'T TELL YOU ANY OF THIS. BUT I'M GOING TO. BECAUSE I ALREADY DID.

IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFICULT, BUT IT'S ALSO GOING TO BE FUN.
THERE WILL BE ADVENTURE AND NEW DISCOVERIES EVEN MORE FANTASTIC THAN THE THINGS YOU'VE SEEN SO FAR.
THERE WILL BE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS. YOU WILL SAVE THE WORLD AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT. YOU'LL OFTEN SAVE MORE THAN THAT.
THERE WILL BE LOVE AND FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP. IT WON'T ALWAYS BE SMOOTH.
BUT WE GET THROUGH IT ALL, TOGETHER.
AND WHEN IT'S OVER, WE LEAVE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE THAN WE FOUND IT. AND THAT'S THE BEST ANYBODY CAN HOPE FOR.
THAT'S REALLY ALL WE CAN SAY. YOU KNOW HOW JOHNNY HATES SPOILERS.
I DUNNO ABOUT THE REST OF YOU, BUT I'M DOWN FOR "PLAN 101". WHO'S WITH ME?
I'M IN.
ME, TOO. ONE QUESTION, THOUGH.
WITH ALL YOUR PLANS TO PROTECT US FROM ARMAGEDDON AND CREATE A BETTER FUTURE, YOU SAID YOU COULDN'T PREDICT THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS, ONLY GROUPS.
RIGHT. BELOW A CERTAIN THRESHOLD, THE ACTS OF INDIVIDUALS, NO MATTER HOW GRAND, CANCEL OUT. IT'S THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORY.
SO WHAT'S THE NUMBER? HOW FEW PEOPLE DO YOU NEED BEFORE YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD?
FOUR.
4

WITH TEAMWORK
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE....

FSE DCP

THIS FSE SCAN FROM DCP WAS SCANNED AND EDITED IN SECRET!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO SAY WHO WE ARE, BECAUSE IT'S NOT REALLY IMPORTANT.
THE IMPORTANT PART HERE IS THAT YOU HAVE A NICE DCP SCAN ON YOUR SCREEN.
<- LIKE IT? [-] BUY IT! ->